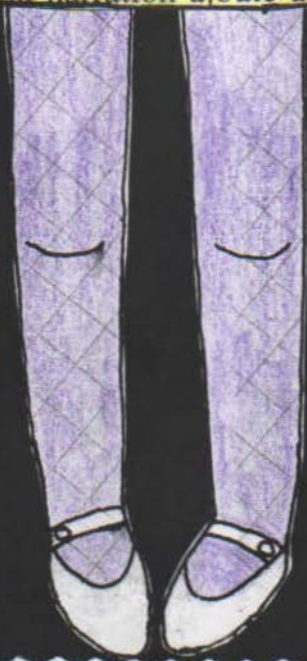


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October 2009

CULTURE

SLUT

#20



"You've been here for three weeks now!"
"Seven weeks now!" "Ten weeks now!"
David exclaims every Saturday, like it
is our anniversary, like there is cause
for celebration. And there is - I'm in
Montréal and I'm happy!

It's been eight months now. Ever since I
got here, things have just been balancing
themselves out. Like, every tiny
little thing. One day I was at the groc-
ery store (l'épicerie) and the cashier
forgot to give me my .25¢ change. I did
not know how to ask for it in French, so
I let it slide. But on my way out, I
found a dime on the floor, then another
one in the parking lot. I picked up a few
pennies off the ground the next day and
there it was, I had my twenty-five cents
back.

This zine is about getting settled in the
city, queerness, cats and periods.

Take care!

♥Amber

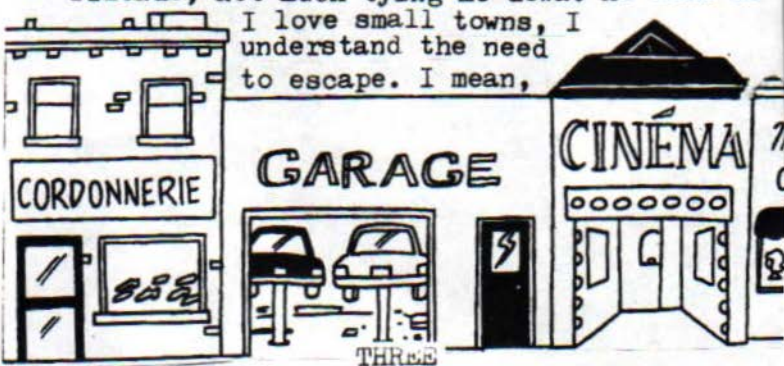


Mid-December of last year, I had a strange dream. I dreamt I was in a new city. I had been at some sort of a protest with friends, but when the cops showed up, the crowd dispersed and I lost sight of everyone I knew. So I ran all alone through the streets of an unknown city. I couldn't read the signs, the language was unrecognizable. I ran past a pizza shop, a clinic, I saw many billboards whose messages I could not decipher. I was confused. I awoke.

The next month, I was living in Montreal. I was dreaming in a new bed with a new boy. I was surrounded by people who spoke a language I did not understand.

I am in love with this city. It didn't take too long to feel at home here and actually, I'm a little surprised. I'm such a small town girl. While my hometown of Lindsay wasn't exactly the mecca of cool, I was content. Everything in town was within walking distance and I knew the streets by heart. I spent a lot of time going on bike rides and throwing parties and writing Fight Boredom, trying to turn everyone into a small town enthusiast, just like me. But I didn't have many close friends, not much tying me down. As much as

I love small towns, I understand the need to escape. I mean,



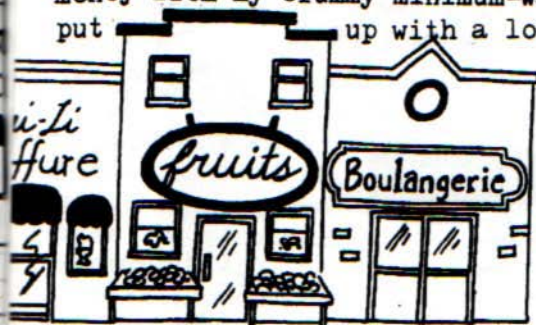
I want to see the world.

I'll admit it, big cities make me nervous. No matter how many times I'd visited friends, gone to concerts and tabled at zine fairs in Toronto, I always felt uncomfortable there. Maybe I could direct you to Massimo's Pizza, but for the most part I had absolutely no idea where one location was in relation to another. I felt perpetually lost, and I worried that Montreal would be the same. At first, I was afraid of straying too far from my apartment building, afraid of taking the bus alone. What if I went in the wrong direction? What if I got lost? I had nightmares about it, nightmares where I was out in the middle of the street at two o'clock in the morning, no idea where I was or which bus would take me home. But it didn't take much to get over my fears. Once I'd taken a few buses by myself, once I'd gotten used to the metro system, everything was fine. I laugh at myself now for worrying about it so much. But I'm a nervous person.

I had arrived in the city with no real plan. I was in love and I had a thousand dollars in my bank account. I figured I'd wait and see where that took me. I'd been saving my money from my crummy minimum-wage job, I'd put

up with a lot of crap from

my co-workers and I figured I deserved a break. My first few months here were a total vacation.

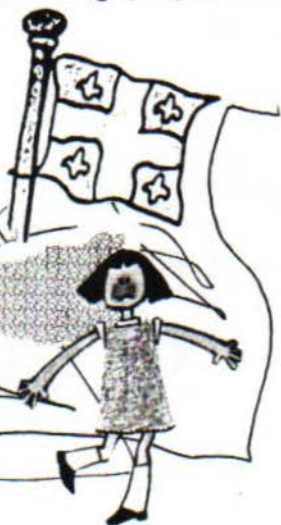


I got out of bed whenever I wanted, I made zines and drank tea all day, I wrote letters and watched movies. I knew I had to learn French though, that eventually I'd have to find a new job and be a normal person. I flipped through a French textbook occasionally, but I mostly just did whatever struck my fancy. One day, David came home with good news; our friend Pieryves had seen a flier on a telephone pole that read, "GET PAID TO LEARN FRENCH!" He'd taken down the number for me. As ridiculous as it sounded, it turned out to be totally legit. I filled out numerous forms with my personal information and answered questions like, "How much money do you make?" None. And, "What brings you to Quebec?" Love.

Now I am a full-time French student. I wake up at seven o'clock in the morning, clean myself up, grab a homemade muffin and ride my bike along Pie-IX until I hit Villeray. I spend my days conjugating verbs, learning the various tenses and practicing proper pronunciation.

This is my first time attending school in nearly a decade. I don't bring it up too often, but for reasons that are complicated

STUPID GIRL



and varied, I dropped out of high school when I was fourteen. I was a good student - I rarely skipped, I had good grades and I enjoyed reading. But I was not meant to be caged in a room full of teenagers for such long periods of time. Recently though, I'd begun to fear that I was, in fact, a very stupid girl. When David asked me about English words that were unfamiliar to him, I found I had trouble explaining them. I knew their meanings, but could not come up with the words to explain them. Whilst reading the lyrics insert of a Dears album, David asked me, "What does 'amid' mean?" We were sitting on the bus together and I tried to explain it. "I don't know, it's like the word 'amidst', kinda. Like, we are amid a crowd of people right now, you know?" I stumbled over my descriptions and gave up. He looked it up in the dictionary when we arrived home, and sure enough, there it was, page 319. "Amid - in the middle of." How blatantly simple. Why could I not think of those words? I'd forgotten how to study, too, could no longer memorize names and dates and places. Couldn't remember the titles of the countless books I've read in my life. It made me feel very self-conscious when I opened my mouth. No matter what I said, it would come out sounding really stupid, wouldn't it?

I am generally not cool with traditional forms of education, but sometimes I feel like a total loser when I tell people how young I was when I left school. All of my friends finished high school, and a whole lot of them are university students or graduates. Do they ever wonder what the hell I'm doing with myself? Am I going to work in coffeehouses and malls forever?

Now that I'm studying French, I've finally got my brain working again. Okay, I'm not a morning person; I don't like the physical act of getting out of bed no matter what time it is, actually. But it's nice to show up at school on time, to take notes and to learn new words and little pieces of Quebec history.

I'm currently in level three out of six in my studies. I'm enrolled in school until April 2010, that's when the government money stops showing up in my mailbox on a bi-weekly basis. Hopefully by then, I'll be fully bilingual. I feel fairly confident in my understanding of the language right now, but I also find it much easier to read and comprehend than to understand the spoken word. I must get over my timidity and practice with my French-speaking friends more often.



2010 sounds soo futuristic - It's only a few months away!

WORST CUNT EXAM EVER

The clerk at my local post office used to intimidate the hell outta me. I found myself at her counter fairly often (hello, I'm a zinester, I'm obsessed with all things postal), and I did not have the skills to speak to her in her language. She'd ask a question and I'd reply, "Je ne parle pas de français," or, "Je ne comprends pas." She'd roll her eyes and repeat herself in English. I'd see the look of recognition on her face every time I went to the post office, but still she'd address me in French, just to, I don't know, exert her power? Make me feel bad?



People here have a reputation for being notoriously rude to Anglophones, but that has not been my experience whatsoever. Everyone has been very kind and understanding with me. I don't understand why this clerk was so intent on upholding the stereotype and making our transactions so much more difficult than they needed to be. I wished I could express myself. She probably thought I was ignorant. "Stupid Ontario girl moves here and refuses to understand our language, knows nothing of our culture or our history..." And I wanted to say, "I'm learning, I swear!"

And I did learn. One day I walked up to her and said, "Je voudrais deux timbres s'il vous plaît," and she was so happy. You should have seen her. She was congratulating me and telling the other customers in line how proud she was. She turned into a totally different person. She's so friendly now, seems so eager to speak with me when I'm mailing my things. She is no longer sour.

FRENCH QUIRKS

IN FRENCH, THE WORD FOR 'SINGLE' IS 'CÉLIBATAIRE', WHICH LITERALLY TRANSLATES TO 'CELIBATE'. FUNNY, IN MY LIFE EXPERIENCES, BEING SINGLE NEVER MEANT BEING CELIBATE!

REALITY TELEVISION SHOW 'A SHOT AT LOVE WITH TILA TEQUILA' IS TITLED 'TILA: CÉLIB ET BI' IN QUEBEC. THE TITLE SIMPLY STATES 'SINGLE AND BISEXUAL'. HOW VERY BLUNT.

IN THE FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF 'THE SIMPSONS', NAMES AND JOKE ARE OFTEN CHANGED IN ORDER TO NAME DROP QUEBEC CELEBRITIES AND MAKE REFERENCES TO THEIR CULTURE.

THERE ARE TWO FRENCH TERMS FOR 'TRAFFIC JAM'. THE FIRST ONE THAT I LEARNED IS 'EMBOUTEILLAGE' WHICH CONTAINS THE WORD 'BOUTEILLE' - BOTTLE. THE OTHER TERM IS 'BOUCHON' - CORK. THEY ARE LITERALLY COMPARING DRIVING IN A TRAFFIC JAM TO ESCAPING A WINE BOTTLE. WHERE ONCE THERE WAS THE FREEDOM OF THE ENTIRE BOTTLE, NOW WE ARE ALL BEING FORCED THROUGH THE NECK. I FOUND THAT ONE REALLY INTERESTING.

INFINITE MOKSHA PLAYED A SHOW IN DRUMMONDVILLE IN FEBRUARY AND IT WAS AN ALRIGHT TIME. IT'S FUNNY HOW I CAN MOVE ALL THIS WAY, YET SOME THINGS WILL NEVER CHANGE. I GUESS I'LL ALWAYS BE SITTING IN THE PASSENGER SEAT OF A VAN, TRAVELING WITH SOME BAND OR ANOTHER. FADELESS, THE NIRVANA TRIBUTE BAND WAS HEADLINING. I HAD A FEW SHOTS OF JAGERMEISTER TO PSYCH MYSELF UP FOR AN AWESOME MOSH PIT, BUT IT JUST DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT. I LIKE THE KIND OF MOSH PIT WHERE YOU CAN RUN RIGHT INTO THE MIDDLE AND GET PUSHED AROUND AND GET LOST AND NOT EVEN THINK, JUST SING ALONG WITH THE SONGS. BUT THIS ONE WAS TOO SPREAD OUT, IT FELT LIKE YOU HAD TO CHASE PEOPLE JUST TO GET IT GOING. PLUS, IT WAS ALL DUDES AND I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF 'EM. IT'S MORE FUN WITH FRIENDS, AND EVEN MORE FUN WITH FEARLESS GIRLS. SO FOR NOW, I CAN SAY THAT MOSH PITs ARE ONE THING THE TOWN OF LINDSAY DOES BETTER. AND P.S. AT ANOTHER SHOW, SOME GUY ACTUALLY APOLOGIZED FOR RUNNING INTO ME IN A MOSH PIT. DUDE, I'M NOT THAT FRAGILE!

WORST CUNT EXAM EVER

Student Doctor: Are you sexually active?

Me: Yeah.

Student Doctor: So you have a boyfriend?

Me: No.

Student Doctor: But you said that you're sexually active...?

Me: Yes.

Student Doctor: I don't understand.

After that introduction, the doctor refused to use lube when she inserted the speculum and examined me, claiming it might mess with the results, nevermind the fact that my regular doctor had been using it for years. She generally did her best to make me feel like a bad person. She didn't seem much older than me, was working at my doctor's office in order to learn. I'm not sure why I didn't complain, perhaps because I was taken aback. The exam was painful and I just wanted to get the hell outta there.

Looking back on it, everything about the visit was simply inappropriate. Not only was she just stopping short of calling me a slut, but it didn't occur to her for a second that I might be queer. She didn't understand how I could be sexually active outside the confines of a heterosexual monogamous relationship, let alone without a man at all.

I think it's interesting what people will say to you when they assume you're straight. I'm not just talking about the plethora of homophobic jokes that people love to make, though

I've certainly heard my fair share. I mean, a few days ago one of my classmates confessed to me that his wife won't let him hang out with his gay friends. She's convinced they're going to "convert" him. Of course, he says this is totally ridiculous. Another classmate, when asked by the teacher to compare her hometown to Montreal said that while she doesn't mind if guys check her out, now that she's in a big city, she feels like girls are checking her out too and it makes her uncomfortable. She kinda shivered then laughed as she said it.



As a child, I was tortured by nightmares and they often had reoccurring themes and happenings. I would often turn to the digital clock on the vcr only to realize that the numbers didn't make any sense, and the time was usually racing, changing every second rather than every minute. It would be 27:95, then 38:62, then 49:80. I always got scared and ran away, usually straight to my bedroom. I begged myself,

happens." Sometimes I was aware that it was only a dream, but I was scared anyway because I didn't know how to wake myself up. Later, years later, I found myself watching Waking Life, and the exact same thing was happening to the clocks. It was so eerie to see my childhood nightmare replayed right before me. Apparently it's a common occurrence, the freaky clock. It's a sign that you are in a deep sleep. It's your cue to do whatever you want.



City-biking is a little daunting. I live in constant fear of being hit by a bus. At least I don't live downtown. When I see bicyclists speeding down St. Denis, I feel completely scared for them. I'm expecting the driver of a parked car to open up the door and smash them to pieces.

One night I was out at a show and it hit me: I am never going to run into any friends here. What a scary realization. I was so used to the excitement of going out and wondering what fabulous people I was going to run into, what sort of adventures we'd come up with on a Saturday night. But I didn't know anyone here. There were no such possibilities. I've read that it takes three years to make good friends in a new city. But I've got a few now, and soon I'll have more. A few weeks ago, I ran into Caroline at the metro and I was just so relieved. Finally, a familiar face! I am going to do just fine.

Whilst attending an outdoor show as part of Montreal's Divers/Cité celebrations, I was handed a flier for another event - Pervers/Cité. From the website: "As Divers/Cité becomes more and more corporate and less and less accountable to the history it represents, there is a growing need for a community response to the depoliticization of Pride. Once again, a coalition of radical queer individuals and groups wants to organize a series of events, workshops, panel discussions, and actions to coincide with Divers/Cité. The aim of this year's series is to address issues normally pushed to the margins by the mainstream gay agenda." It sounded like my cup of tea.

On a lovely Sunday afternoon, Sarala and I met up to go to the queer picnic together. We arrived as the barbecue and tents were being set up and chose a shady spot on the grass to sit down and observe the goings-on. We played it shy for a little while, mostly just talking amongst ourselves and discussing our own experiences in the realm of queerness. Sarala mused aloud the very thing I was wondering myself; "If I had short hair, would people stop assuming I'm straight?" We both have long, sometimes candy-coloured hair. I've been rocking the Bettie Page bangs for years. We both want to be visible as queers, but we don't want to conform to a certain look either. Someone recently asked me why it's so important for me to feel that I am identifiable as a queer girl. Frankly, it's because I feel like a fraud. When I am amongst a group of straight people, I feel somehow different

bags. We decided we'd be much more sociable if we got some alcohol into our systems and headed out in search of a local dépanneur. What was meant to be a quick jaunt turned into an adventure in itself, as we wandered to the outskirts of the city with a six-pack of Ste. Ambroise apricot wheat ale and found a shrubbed area to drink in. Of course, we never made it back to the picnic. We explored the streets that we'd previously only seen from the highway above and told stories and wondered what passersby thought when they saw us crouched in the bushes by the road. It was a good afternoon.

A few days later, I attended a queer walking tour. This is kind of a big deal because I went ALL ALONE. I've only mentioned it a thousand times before, but I can be painfully shy. I worried that without a friend to tag along with, I wouldn't go out at all. I had to say, "Amber, get over yourself! Go make some friends!" When I got to métro Champ-de-Mars I recognized a few people from the queer picnic, so I walked straight up to them and introduced myself. This is not like me AT ALL. It felt really good. Everyone was very friendly and introduced themselves to me. I immediately connected to a girl with short dark hair and a blonde streak - I think we were both the awkward shy girls who didn't know anyone else, so it made sense to stick together. Amanda and I tagged along with each other throughout the tour, learning about various sites of queer importance, like courthouses and an eclectic garden that once had a gay bar built

on the land. I spent the afternoon fretting over my forgotten sunscreen whilst Amanda took lovely photos with her Holga. I loved watching the confused expressions on passersby's faces as we stood grouped together on the city's corners, talking about sites (in French and English) that they walk past everyday, that they'd never given any thought to before... Some people made their way home when it started to rain, but Amanda and I stuck it out until the end, saying goodbye as the evening fell and promising to hang out again sometime.

Later that week, Sarala and I were meant to attend a workshop at the Ste. Emilie Skillshare called "Are You Queer Enough?" wherein we were promised discussions of oppressions within the queer community, including the "policing" of individuals' identities. This would have been really interesting and thought-provoking I'm sure, especially considering our earlier discussion about visibility by way of hairstyles. I was totally looking forward to it. But I guess it wasn't meant to be. We'd been warned that the skillshare was difficult to find, but armed with a map and positive thoughts, we thought we'd be okay. Apparently not. We wandered around for just over an hour before we said, "Fuck it, let's go eat sorbet by the water." And we did. And it was delicious.

Saturday came around, just one day before the pride parade and there were all sorts of festivities happening on Ste. Catherine, including a booth set up by Queer Coupe, a group that gives "queer haircuts" for a donation, and gives the money to a centre for queer youth.

Totally admirable in my books, and Sarah, a professional hairstylist, was donating her time for the afternoon... This of course brings up my issue with a queer "look" (hello skinny jeans and asymmetrical haircuts) and wishing to fit in, but it was all in good fun. One girl boldly had DYKE shaved into her head and I thought it was pretty badass. Amanda and I sat on the curb spectating on all the hair-cutting action, and later exploring the shops for leopard print tights and colourful wigs. Walking along Ste. Catherine, the corporate takeover of Pride was impossible to ignore. The street was lined with various booths, every attendant eager to throw stickers and fliers and free gifts in our faces. One group was affixing their stickers to the arms of random passersby and saying, "Now you've been tattooed!" Nevermind the total invasion of one's personal space. Yeah, it's a crowded street and everyone's excited and everyone's celebrating, but I don't think that it's EVER cool to touch a random stranger without their permission. As someone with unconventional hair and visible tattoos, I am constantly being touched by strangers and it really grinds my gears. People always want to play with my hair and pet my tattoos, and they do it without hesitation - in the classroom, on the subway, and right over the counter at my last job. It never seems to occur to them that reaching out and grabbing a total stranger is, um, a total violation of privacy. It always startles me and leaves me speechless. I am much too kind, and much too shy to say, "Please don't touch me," but I'm learning. Anyway, the group with the stickers, they didn't "tattoo" me with their logo. I like to think that my actual tattoos intimidated them a bit.

But what do I know? I think the worst offender this year, was TD Bank. They had an army of wet, shiny, muscled men wearing nothing but green hot pants and TD Bank temporary tattoos. Oh, it was an absolute joke. And I saw hundreds of party-goers with TD's tattoos stuck all over their bodies and thought, "Really? Who's falling for this?"—Are we supposed to invest our money with them because they sport the rainbow in their office's windows? Later in the day, I spotted a few TD bikini-clad girls and it just made me respect the company even less. Here they were displaying this awful soft-porn image of "beauty" and patting themselves on the back for being "gay-friendly". Oh, it was laughable when it wasn't infuriating. As much as I wanted an excuse to get drunk outdoors in the middle of the afternoon, I didn't go to the parade the next day. I stayed home and read zines in my underwear, the only way to deal with that week's unbearable heat. I watched the clips on the news later. I think my favourite part was when a middle-aged spectator was shown saying, "I think it's okay, but I'm not like... them." Saying "them" with a tone of disdain, like they're freaks or something.

And that's
the story
of my very
first Pride.



My sister and I were about eleven years old when we were allowed to purchase our first cassette tapes containing "parental advisory" warnings. She chose Alanis Morissette's "Jagged Little Pill" and I chose Marilyn Manson's "Smells Like Children".

I had a crush on Twiggy Ramirez, what with his long tangled hair and his thick black eyeliner and his babydoll dresses, he was like a gothic Courtney Love with a cock. On my thirteenth birthday I bought a large poster of the photo insert from the album and hung it on my bedroom wall. Twiggy stared at me with his scary eyes and taunted me with his pink dress, making me wish I could see underneath it. When a boyfriend made note of it I said, "So what, he's hot." I'm not sure if the word 'queer' had entered my vocabulary yet, it certainly wasn't part of my identity. But I openly crushed on androgynous boys and it never occurred to me that people might think it a little bit strange. When I was eighteen or nineteen I went to see A Perfect Circle with some friends.

Twiggy (aka Jeordie White) was playing bass with the band at the time. I was about three rows back, the closest I would ever get to my teen obsession and it felt really awesome.

I recently came across a collection of old photos and was reminded of things I hadn't thought about in a long time. A lot of the photos were from local shows with my old boyfriend's band. Like the show at the Academy Theatre where he wore an old thrift store dress - like

ly inspired by Kurt Cobain. He would not have admitted it at the time, but the long blonde hair and scruffy face were a dead giveaway. I couldn't wait to run my hands up his thighs and under his dress that night. He used to let me paint his nails... In the end, he was actually quite homophobic, making offensive and inappropriate remarks at all times. Begging me to choose between girls and boys. Oh well oh well oh well.





On April 16th, 1998 I was exactly twelve and a half years old. That morning, I sat in my geography class staring at the clock and clutching onto my stomach thinking, "When will this end?" The pain, or the class, I'm not sure which end I was anticipating. I'm prone to stomachaches, and although this pain was slightly different than usual, it didn't occur to me that something was up. I stared at the clock throughout geography class and the following math class as well. Finally, the bell rang for lunch. The pain had not subsided, though I didn't think to stop by the washroom to check things out. I had read every Judy Blume book I could find, and I'd paid close attention in my health classes, but it just never occurred to me that I, Amber Forrester, would one day begin to bleed from her cunt. That was what grownups did. Besides that, I had a fear of schools and washrooms and school washrooms.

I walked down Kent Street, as I did every afternoon, pocketing the lunch money my mom had given me, which I usually saved up to spend on cds and metal lunchboxes for my collection. My cunt felt wet, my underwear felt wet. I justified this feeling, thinking to myself, "It's a hot day, maybe you're just really sweaty down there." I went back to school and waited out my classes. The first thing I did when I returned home was dash into the washroom and pull down my pants. There it was, dark red blood, I'd destroyed my favourite pair of underwear. Thankfully, I was embracing grunge fashion at the time, so my

baggy clothes guaranteed I'd never have that telltale period stain on the crotch of my pants. My over-sized Nirvana t-shirts could cover that up. Still, I was shy and didn't know what to do. I threw my stained undies in the garbage and stuffed a clean pair with wads of toilet paper to soak up the seemingly never-ending flow. I got up the guts to tell my mom about it in the morning, whispering it in her ear when she was half-asleep, successfully avoiding a womanly chat.

For years, I cried and cried every month. The pain, the mess, it was all too much. I did eventually become comfortable with my period (or at least resigned to the fact that I cannot ignore it). I am content now, perhaps because of the predictability the pill has given me, perhaps because I am fascinated by the blood that accumulates in my DivaCup every time I use it. Still, it's a bit of a bothersome event, don't you think?

The preceding piece
was written by me this
past summer and originally

appeared as a submission in

issue #12 of

shortandqueer, an

issue dedicated

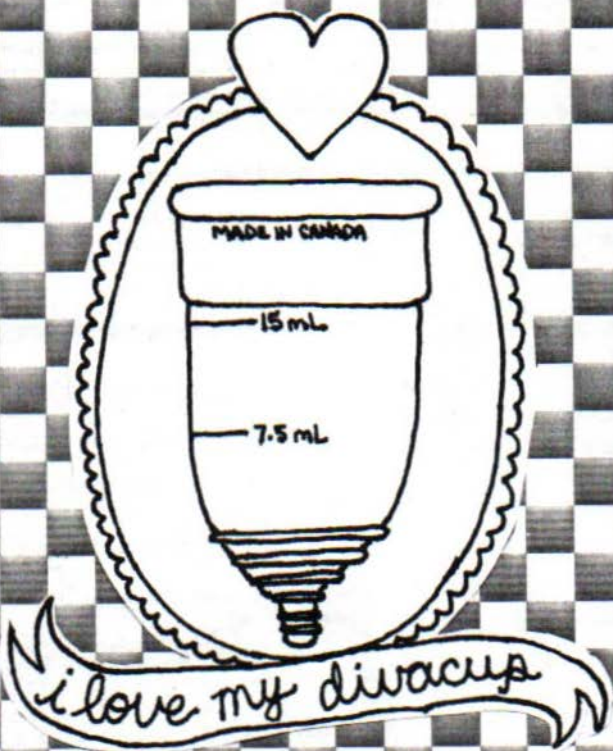
to period stories.

You can email

shortandqueer@yahoo

to get a copy.





Traditional menstrual products are no fun. It is estimated that 12 billion pads and 7 billion tampons make their way into North American landfills every year. Not to mention the packaging they come in, the bleach and chemicals contained within and the energy that goes into the manufacturing of 'em. Fucking disgusting.

My foray into the world of alternative menstrual products began with cloth pads. If you're going to bleed onto something, it may as well be soft flannel. Plus, you can make pads out of all sorts of ridiculous

fabric and walk down the street happily, knowing that there are polkadots and kittens and skulls in your underwear. Try searching Etsy.com for cloth pads, there are plenty. There are also many tutorials out there if you wanna make your own. I've been using my DivaCup for a little over a year now. They are available online at DivaCup.com as well as at various sex shops and health food stores. I bought mine at Venus Envy, along with a leopard-spotted vibrator - that was a good day for my cunt! Menstrual cups cost around \$40-\$50 and are made to last 10-15 years. Fifty bucks may sound like a lot of money, but compare that to the \$100-\$200 the average woman spends on pads and tampons every year. Suddenly fifty bucks doesn't sound so bad! Ever since I started talking about mine, friends have been asking me plenty of questions. I did a lot of reading up before I bought one and I've found the tales of other ladies' experiences to be quite helpful, so I figured I'd offer up a few of my own observations...

The DivaCup comes with detailed instructions for insertion, but it can still be tricky sometimes. I'm not gonna lie to you - I was extremely frustrated the first few times I used it. I was nervous, so my muscles tightened up, making it difficult to get it in and positioned correctly. I tried it out for a cycle, switched back to cloth pads for a few months, then came back to the DivaCup when I was feeling more determined. My point is that you need to relax. I find that if I'm particularly bloody (like on the first two days of my period), it slides in no problem, but if the flow is slowing down, or I've just hopped fresh outta the shower, it takes a little more effort to get it in right.

Don't be afraid to play around with it. If it's inserted correctly, you should barely be able to feel it, and you shouldn't have any problems with leakage. In fact, most of the time I forget it's even there. A lot of people complain about how finicky the thing can be, but the only way to perfect it is to try, try again. After a few cycles, you'll get to know your flow. You'll know exactly how much you bleed on any given day and how often to empty your cup. Bear in mind that it shouldn't be left in longer than 12 hours.

I'm never gonna be the kinda girl who celebrates her period - PMS puts me on edge and leaves me prone to random fits of tears, and I get hideous cramps that leave me doubled over on the floor sometimes. But the DivaCup is helping me to live a greener life and it has made my period a little more fun. Frankly, I find my collected blood fascinating! I have a friend who paints with her menstrual blood and I've heard of people watering their plants with it as well. I don't have any houseplants, so you'll have to experiment with that one on your own. Have fun!

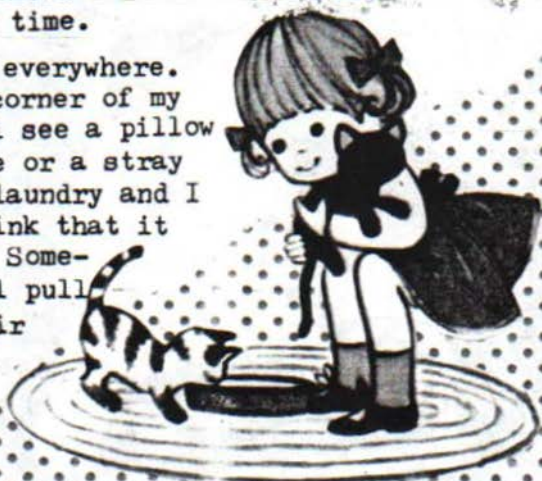
RUMMY AND SEBASTIAN

Rummy was a ginger tabby. When I was a child he lived with our neighbours, but when they moved away they didn't want him anymore. He was given to my sister and I as a gift when we were ten. He may well have been the same age as us at the time, but we'll never know. He was a fat cat, over twenty pounds with long, long fur. He rolled over for bellyrubs like a dog and could say the word "Mom" when he meowed. I talked



Just before my twenty-first birthday, he fell ill. He slept a lot. He stopped eating, stopped using his kitty litter box. He spent days on end curled up at the end of the bed, barely making a sound. He lost a lot of weight. He was in pain. We'd been putting off a visit to the vet because we wanted my sister (who was living in another city at the time) to have her chance to say goodbye, but it couldn't wait any longer. One morning, my mom said, "Alright, I'll bring him today." And that was it. I ran my fingers through his fur (which he'd stopped grooming, hence he had little kitty dreadlocks), kissed his nose, said goodbye and went to sleep. I've never seen my mom cry so much in my life. I stayed home because I couldn't bear to see him go, but I see now what a selfish decision that was. We were told that he'd likely had stomach cancer, but he was so old that there was no use in treating it anyway. We had him put down. At somewhere around twenty years old, it was his time.

I see him everywhere. From the corner of my eye I will see a pillow or a purse or a stray piece of laundry and I always think that it is Rummy. Sometimes I'll pull an old pair of socks from my drawer and





find that his shedded fur is still stuck to 'em.

I lived pet-free for a few years, missing Rummy all along. But I was moving a lot, never quite sure where I'd be in six months, so it was not really an ideal environment for a pet friend. Also, I was afraid that another cat would simply feel like a replacement and I

worried that I might not love him or her as much. Maybe there was a little bit of over-analysis going on, but I feel that cat friends are very important.

Sebastian came into our lives earlier this summer when a friend was offer ing free kittens. He is absolutely adorable . I barely saw him the first few days that he was living with us because he was so shy that he mostly just hid under the couch all day. He is white with orange spots and stripes on his tail. His legs are often grey because he likes to horse around with the dust bunnies. His shy days are over and he's a happy, hyper kitty. Sometimes he gets so excited that he pants like a dog, tongue out and all.

I realize now how much I'd missed having a cat around. He likes to chase crumpled balls of paper around the house, climb things, eat our hair and hide under the doormat. He hangs out on the kitchen counter while I'm doing the dishes and falls asleep in my lap when I'm reading a book. Sometimes he falls asleep in a crate of zines and he loves to give lots of kisses. It's so wonderful having a cat around the house again, snuggling with me, staying at my feet as I walk from room to room, meowing sweetly when he wants attention and doing all sorts of silly things. Okay, he gets on my nerves occasionally, like when he bites my toes and rips my tights, but mostly he is lovely and beautiful and I already love him. I like to think that he's smarter than the other cats because we speak to him in two languages, but his behaviour proves otherwise.

Ode To A Bicycle
Named Olive

I rode my bike up and down Kent Street everyday until she was stolen. The seat would rub against my denim-clad crotch, bringing me nearly to orgasm by the time I had reached home.

Olive doesn't do that, but I love her anyway.



WOMEN IN LIGHT

SPRING DRESSES

When I see
a woman
in a light
spring dress
I am overcome
with a perverted
idea:

I want
to put
one
on

-Offline


(Seen scrawled in Sharpie on a
wall in Toronto.)



24 Things I Want To Do Before I Die

1. Finish my sleeve.
2. Learn French.
3. Make skirts.
4. Own a cursive typewriter.
5. Do yoga.
6. Replace the old record player.
7. Become a better photographer.
8. Learn how to play my guitar, Fifi.
9. Grow my hair long, long, long.
10. Wear it in a beehive.
11. Start a zine distro.
12. Learn how to repair typewriters.
13. Table at the Portland Zine Symposium.
14. Visit England again. Specifically, Brighton.
15. Go on a hot air balloon ride.
16. Learn how to silkscreen.
17. Pick up some embroidery skills.
18. Stop blushing.
19. Live on a property with an apple tree.
20. Start a vegetable garden.
21. Revolutionize my hometown.
22. Articulate myself well.
23. Find a job that doesn't destroy my soul.
24. Stop procrastinating.

I wrote this list in celebration of my 24th birthday this month. I have an obsession with lists of all sorts, but especially to-do lists. I would be lost without them.



When I see a cute girl,

I am usually thinking

one of three things:

Either I want to fuck her,

or I want to be her best friend,

or I want to be her.

CUNT

'Cunt' is a lovely word. Back in the day, it was used as a title of respect for women, priestesses and witches. It is related to words from India, China, Ireland, Rome and Egypt and was also a derivative of the names of various goddesses. Pretty cool, huh? Personally, I love the word because it really means everything; vagina, clitoris, everything. All encompassing. Plus, it feels good to say it, and sometimes people look at you funny.

I am all about reclaiming this wonderful word and turning it back into something positive. I like to talk about my cunt and I like it when other people talk about their cunts, too. I like to say, "My cunt is bleeding." I think it's hot when my boyfriend says cunt.

I can't stand it when people use it as an insult though. Oh, so-and-so is such a cunt. It's just not cool. To me, it's right up there with calling things gay or retarded, when you really mean "not cool." Cunts are totally cool. I love my cunt and I don't want the word to be so negative and taboo. I am all about throwing the word around because I think censoring it relegates it back to 'dirty word' status. But hurling it around as an insult doesn't do anything to bust down the taboo, doesn't do anything for the cause. It just makes you look like a jerk.

FIGHT BOREDOM WITH ZINES!!!

Violet #1 punkoliqueAThotmail.com

Brought to you by the author of bilingual craft zine *Histamine*, this is a perzine in the truest sense. Andréanne begins by writing about her trip to Paris. Notable happenings include record-shopping, walking through the Père Lachaise cemetery, and paying eight Euros for a cup of hot chocolate. She gets me to feeling all sorts of nostalgia as she tells tales of the Louvre, Champs-Élysées, and Montmartre, the very places I visited with my friend Jenni in 2005, one year after the author. She also writes about fashion magazines, discovering punk rock and making use of her grandfather's vintage typewriter. Never leaving out her DIY spirit, this zine includes a tutorial on transplanting the leaves of African Violets to breed new plants and a recipe for watermelon salad. There are a few small grammatical errors due to Andréanne learning English as a second language, but frankly, I find it absolutely adorable.

Girl Photographer #2 eleanorjane.parsonsAThotmail.co.uk

I must have eyed up this zine at Eleanor Jane's Etsy shop for something like six months before I finally took the plunge and paid nine dollars (including postage from the UK to Canada) for this full-colour 38-page photography / perzine. Although it looked beautiful, the price was obviously holding me back. But, having made a full-colour photography zine myself, I understand that the printing costs are outrageously high (I am embarrassed to admit how much I spent making my Polaroid zine), and I like to be able to help support zinesters if I have the means to do it. So I went ahead, and I don't regret it one bit. In this issue, Eleanor Jane writes about various adventures in London and New York City, fighting off apathy and bouts of uncreativity, and the stories of seedy little hotels. If you know me, you know I love lists, and this zine has some good ones: a list of every bed she slept in during 2007, her 2008 New Year's Resolutions, ways to keep warm in a cold flat, and a few zine recommendations (including *Your Pretty Face Is Going Straight To Hell* and *Stab Heart*, a few of my own personal favourites). Oddly enough, *Violet #1* and *Girl Photographer #2* both mention how delicious almond croissants are. The latter even includes a photo. I've never had one in my life, but am sooo craving it now. This zine has got self-portraits, photos of friends, food and her general surroundings, as well as some pretty wonderful photos of NYC. A lot of them have rounded corners - for some reason, rounded corners make me very very happy. I find it difficult to describe the atmosphere and whimsy of the photos included, but suffice to say, they are really quite stunning. I am especially enthralled by the textures that are created by photocopying things like doilies, stickers and various decorative papers. I'm definitely keeping my eye out for future issues.

List #13 everydaypantsATgmail.com

The title pretty much gives this one away. Yes, it's a zine of lists. But it's so much more than that! Each issue is divided into three sections: Ramsey's lists pertaining to her daily life, found lists, and guestlists (lists submitted by readers). The found lists were omitted from this issue due to lack of space, though this zine certainly doesn't feel like it's missing anything, clocking in at over sixty pages. It's subtitled "moving on" and revolves mostly around Ramsey's move from Baltimore to Chicago and her recent breakup. As she says, every zine is allowed at least one breakup issue, right? Although she is obviously heartbroken and feeling somewhat out of place in her new city, this zine contains so much hope and positivity. Lists include People I've Lived With, Little Things I Miss About Baltimore, Living With Daniel vs. Living With Harpswell and Ava, Why I Like Being A Nanny and Weird Things About Public Transit. There is a comic that goes with every list and readers who submit guestlists are asked to include corresponding drawings as well. Ramsey manages to capture so many thoughts and emotions in her lists (and artwork as well), it's a very engaging read, the kind you can go back to over and over again. I'd read several issues in the past, though this one really struck me, perhaps because I also broke up with a bearded Daniel recently. Uncanny! Shameless self-promotion: My list, Things I Wanna Do During My First Year In Beautiful Montréal is also included.

Imaginary Windows #4 crinfaeATgmail.com

I cannot say enough good things about this zine. This is a text-heavy quarter-size perzine featuring good stories, Victorian clipart and bicycle Polaroids. Erin begins by writing about the beauty of her neighbourhood in the springtime and her bicycle, aptly named Petal. But this isn't your typical bike zine. She writes much about her identity as queer high-femme, and the difficulties her manner of dress (bloomers, petticoats, layers and layers of skirts), sometimes poses in regards to her chosen method of transportation. It was a perspective I'd never really thought about before (although I'm a fan of miniskirt bike-riding myself). She writes about self-perception, intention and gender presentation in an extremely thoughtful and personal way. Learning to overcome a fear of riding through the busy streets of New York City, building muscles and queer (in)visibility. Seriously, I wanna drink tea and go on bike rides with this girl, she is too awesome. There is also a short article written by a friend on how to do vintage fashion easily by modeling oneself after vintage photos of "real" women as opposed to movie stars, and simple accessories that can vintage-fy any outfit. Also included is a short essay on sound art, a lovely drink recipe and a few pieces on the US postal system. Did you know that 5-digit zipcodes in the United States were put into place on July 1st, 1963? Without spoiling anything, I'll tell you that you absolutely need to read the tale of the theft of Petal. This is one of the best zines I've read this year. Or maybe ever.

Virgin #1 virginzineATgmail.com

Virgin is a quarter-size perzine written by an anonymous girl in the UK all about, well, virginity. In the intro, she says, "Basically, I'm not getting any and never have had any. This doesn't really bother me, but it bothers the rest of the world and that reaction DOES bother me." She chronicles her romantic life in chronological order, from being bullied as a preteen for not crushing on boys and having her first celebrity crush turn out to be a girl, to persevering through awkward dates and makeout sessions. Her lack of experience often leads friends to question her

sexuality, basically asking, "If you haven't had sex, how do you know who you're attracted to?" This, of course, is absolutely ridiculous - If a virgin claims to be heterosexual, no one questions them, but if you're queer (or bisexual, or asexual, or anything but straight), somehow you have to prove yourself? Not cool. She writes about the many questions she asks herself about her own sexuality, and her experiences within the LGBT community. Also included is a short list of famous virgins throughout history (Hans Christian Andersen, Lewis Carroll and Emily Dickinson, among others), and people who were known for their virginity at some point in their lives (including Adolf Hitler and Britney Spears). This is a short but engaging read on a topic that is not discussed often enough. There is currently a call for submissions out for issue #2 and I'm certainly looking forward to checking it out in the future.

Nothing Rhymes #5 chelseacreatureATgmail.com

Chelsea's zines are pretty much among my favourites ever. She has an excellent way of telling a story and she always inspires me to get up and DO SOMETHING. Although there are several stories in this zine, including tales of moving to a new city, exploring an abandoned building and learning to become a morning person, the bulk of this issue revolves around the death of her beloved catfriend, Beary. She writes about how they came to meet (after he was abandoned as a kitten) and her subsequent discovery of his illnesses - asthma and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (in short, he had heart problems and troubles breathing properly). She writes about taking care of him in a really honest and sincere way - um, I almost cried. Laid out against a background of old maps, the entire zine is cut and paste, written on a vintage typewriter and has such excellent little details, like a hand-bound spine, vellum covers and a blue wrap-around closure. I think they may have different sayings depending on which copy you get. Mine reads, *"tried to put my finger on it but i gave it my whole arm."* Maybe I feel a little more attached to this zine because I have also lost a dear catfriend who was in poor health, but I would seriously recommend it to anyone who loves a good perzine.

10 Words That I Wish You Wouldn't Say kaleyATdal.ca

This is a short but sweet mini-zine that was made for the 2008 Anchor Archive 24-Hour Zine Challenge. The title pretty much gives it away, but yes, this zine is about ten words that you probably shouldn't be using improperly, for example; lame, pussy, gay, retarded, et cetera. Each page contains the offending word, it's dictionary definition and a brief example of why you shouldn't be using it. At the end, the author offers constructive tips for curbing one's use of oppressive language habits. I really like the accessibility and frankness of this zine and kinda wish I had a million copies to share with everyone I meet. Sometimes it's good to stop and think about exactly what it is you're saying.

For more zine reviews, adventurous tales and tips on fighting boredom, please visit: www.hello-amber.blogspot.com.

Ladies and gentlemen of Etsy, you are wonderful. You buy my zines and you leave positive feedback and you keep my photocopy fund running. But many of you are complete and utter strangers. I've noticed lately that many of you will purchase the latest issue of Culture Slut or Fight Boredom within a week of its release, collecting copies as a child would perhaps collect baseball cards. I get that Paypal payment notification email and I recognize your names and addresses, yet I still have no idea who you are.

Zines are all about communication, so I say, "Communicate!" Write me a letter. For zinesters, coming home to a full mailbox is almost akin to having an orgasm. True fact. It's a little unsettling when I think about how many of you Etsians I never hear from because I know you're enjoying my zines. You must be getting something out of them because you keep buying them. So, let's talk.

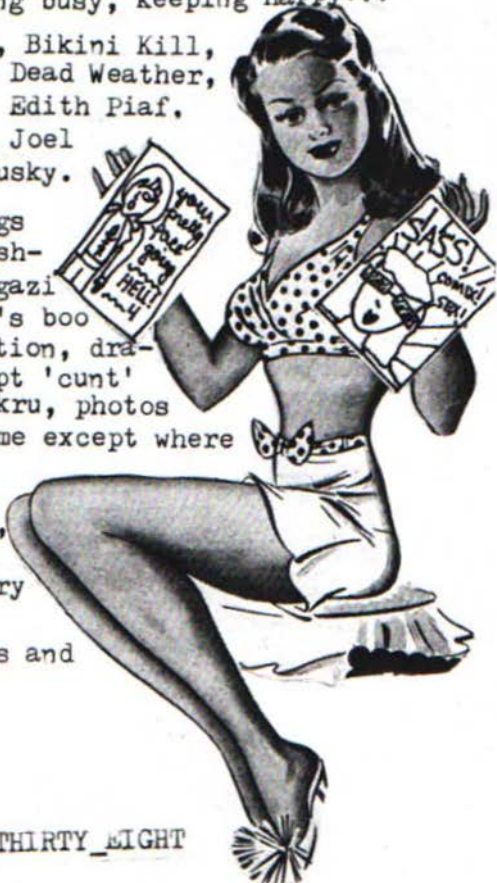
My favourite part about zines isn't just making them. Of course, I love to write and cut and paste. But one of the best parts is exchanging letters and making connections with delightful people all over the world. I would be sad if Etsy turned something so unique and heartfelt as zines into nothing but a simple transaction. Click, pay, check your mailbox in a week. It's so much more than that. Don't be shy.

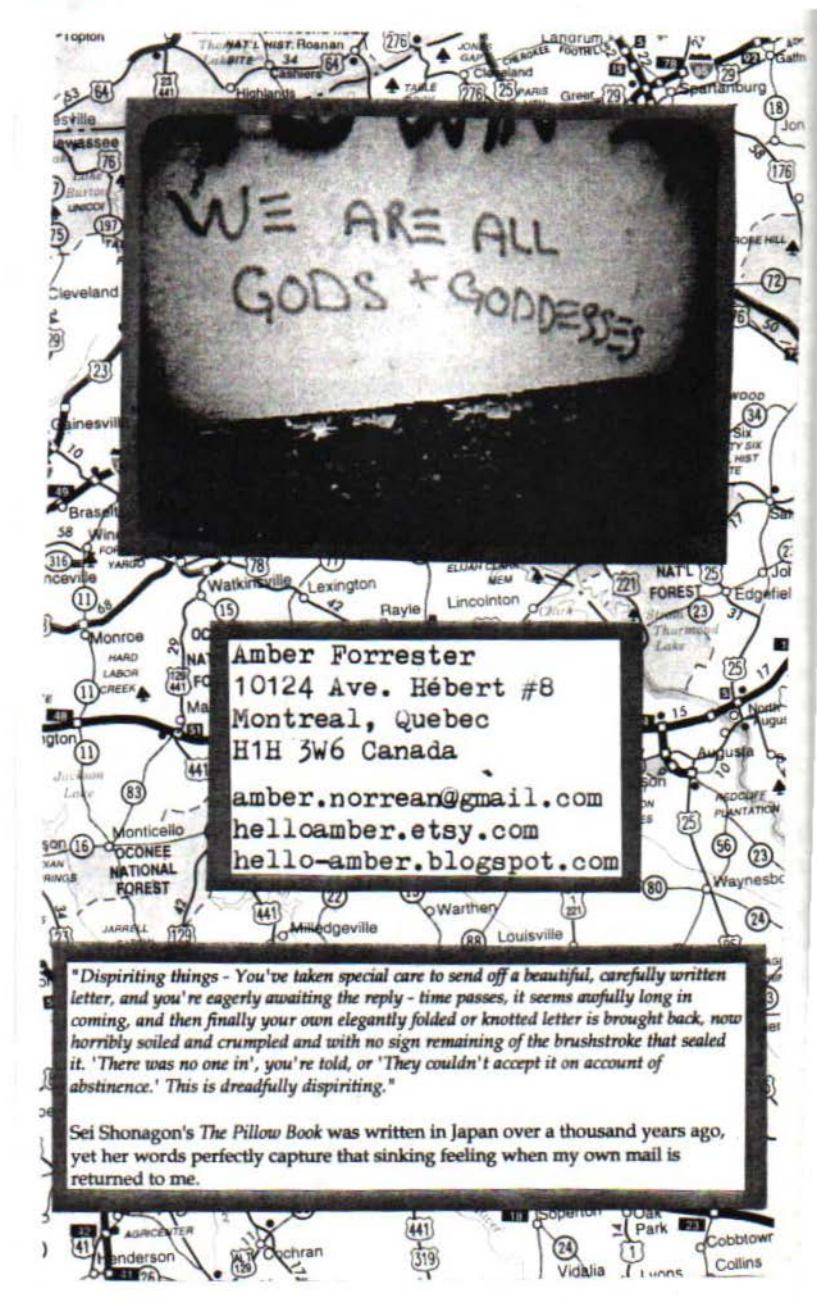
WHAT I'VE BEEN UP TO LATELY: Singing and dancing when I'm home alone, trading zines, baking vegan cupcakes, getting a cupcake tattoo, exploring the city, starting to like beer, preparing for Canzine and Expozine, reading lots of books, loving my pink hair, having ridiculously awesome sex, going to shows, writing epic letters, sewing felt hearts onto my clothes, updating my zine blog, drinking peppermint tea, wearing David's flannel shirts on chilly days, trying to eradicate girl jealousy, you know, the usual. Keeping busy, keeping happy...

SOUNDTRACK: Hole, Bikini Kill, Lesley Gore, The Dead Weather, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Edith Piaf. The Coathangers, Joel Plaskett and Mclusky.

CREDITS: Clippings from French worksh-eets, vintage magazines and children's books and my collection, drawings by me except 'cunt' on page 21 by Tukru, photos by me, words by me except where credited.

THANK YOU: David, Sarala, Amanda, Bri, Amy and every one who sends me zines and letters and treats me well.





WE ARE ALL
GODS + GODDESSES

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"Dispiriting things - You've taken special care to send off a beautiful, carefully written letter, and you're eagerly awaiting the reply - time passes, it seems awfully long in coming, and then finally your own elegantly folded or knotted letter is brought back, now horribly soiled and crumpled and with no sign remaining of the brushstroke that sealed it. 'There was no one in', you're told, or 'They couldn't accept it on account of abstinence.' This is dreadfully dispiriting."

Sei Shonagon's *The Pillow Book* was written in Japan over a thousand years ago, yet her words perfectly capture that sinking feeling when my own mail is returned to me.